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Interview with Glen Marshall

Glen Marshall

Kate Hitchcock

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ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

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Researcher's name: Kate Hitchcock

Event: Interview with Glen Marshall

Place: Alternative Center

Date: October 13, 1999

K – This is Kate Hitchcock interviewing Glen Marshall on October 13, 1999 around 2:30. Just to start off with, I guess the basic biographical information, how you came to this school, your background...

G – I've had three years in education, both 25 years and a math teacher, at a eleven years at Miami Trace(?), fourteen years at Mt. Vernon high school, five years as the assistant principal at Mt. Vernon high school. I retired from education in '98 and came out of retirement in '99 to become the director at the Alternative Center.

K – Okay, I'm just going to stop this....

-----break-----

K – If you could, describe for me the general structure of the Alternative School – what a typical day is for a student, and then what a typical day is for you.

G – Students come here – I don't know if I'm answering this question in the way you want here – students come here from either – for two lengths, we enter a short term or long term. A short term student would be someone who would either – got into a fight or something, per say, disruption in the classroom, and they'd come there for either a five or ten day length of stay. We have people here from Moundbuilders and from the Freedom Center to try to talk to these students, to maybe change their behavior so that when they go back to their high school they won't come here again. Those students are on the course work from their home schools. The students that come here long term have a history of disruptions, and they are placed here either by the local superintendent, or through the juvenile court, and they are all on a course of instruction that we offer here in either English, math, science, social studies, we have an art course, we have a gym, we have PE, um, so they're on a schedule of courses that we offer here, then. My day is pretty much, as like an administrator, I see parents for, we talk about, of intake conferences, sometimes it takes a half hour to an hour in length to talk to the parents, depends on how much the parents want to talk to me of things. I order lunches, I do attendance for the three classrooms that we have. Um, I guess administratively that's pretty much my job then.

K – But you also are a teacher?

G – Yes, I am a teacher where I go around and assist students, say, if they need help. I have an aide, though, that is a full-time, and that aide assists the students as well. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, we have students the Nazarine? College come in. They're on

their sophomore – I don't know what it's called, but it's job experience, so they come and they spend all day with us on Tuesdays and Thursdays. That's to say I have two students on Tuesday and then two different students on Friday. When our enrollment increases probably in January and February, I'll probably up how many students we need to four or five – students from the **Nazarine** College to come in and to assist. So that gives us other support people to help the students out in their lessons.

K – And that's on a volunteer basis?

G – That, - well these students are volunteering to come to this location. Some go to **Hyon?** high school, some go to Mt. Vernon, some go to whatever school they want to tie in with.

K – If you could, describe for me the classroom set-up, and what purpose it serves.

G – Kate, we are in a classroom setting which is not a typical setting where a teacher stands up and teaches. In my particular classroom, which consists of eighth through twelfth graders, I'd say – I have sixteen students, I think three or four of them are eighth grader, I've got one senior, I've got two eleventh graders, maybe two sophomores and the rest are freshmen. The majority of them come from Mt. Vernon, but they can come from East Knox, Danville, **Centerburg?**, I've got one student from Utica, they can come from **Clear Fort**, and the Knox County Career Center. I don't stand up and teach because I've got students on different pages in different books. If they're on our courses, then we assist them, you know, in that respect, but there is no standing up and lecturing. It is pretty much a self-taught kind of environment. We do have the people to assist, as well as – as I said, they have my aide as well as other students and myself to help them. We have people from the Moundbuilders guidance center to come in and talk with the students. We have a lady from the alcohol and drug Freedom Center. She comes in and does an evaluation of the students as an intake quota, orientation session. It takes about an hour to see her opinion of their drug abuse. We have the probation officers upstairs who come down to assist if there's any problems, but basically they sit there in their carrel from eight thirty til two. Um we allow them, obviously, to go to the restroom, get a drink. They can get up from their seats to do that or throw away papers. But at lunch they sit at their carrel and eat their lunch there, and we take them outside, at least this first semester, or first semester for about, oh, about a half hour to forty-five minutes. Now, second semester we'll be able to take them to the YMCA for a two hour session twice a week for gym, but we need our numbers to increase to legitimize the expense at that time.

K – In terms of separating the desks, that's just to make sure that each student is working on their particular – just to keep them separated?

G – Yeah, just to keep them separated. It's a small carrel. I would say you would probably find these, like, in a, in the library, and that's where they sit, just to keep them somewhat separate. There's, what – two, four, there's five in a row – there's another five in a row, there's four over there, and about seven or eight in this row. There's four rows

of them facing all in the same direction. So it keeps them somewhat separated. We don't have individual desks like in a normal classroom.

K – Except for Mrs. Springer's ...

G – Except for Mrs. Springer's is – she has fourth through seventh graders, and we treat them with a little different approach with the age of the students that she does have.

K – Now, with the division of girls and guys, do you find that that makes it better, or – in the upper levels?

G – Yes. Being this my first year here, I did sub two months last January and February, and it was done the same way. Mr. Young, who used to be the director here for many years – he started this program – he used to have, um, when he would fill up with twenty students, then they would go over, you know, what ever twenty students were, boys or girls. Last year, I guess he started up and got them into a boys and girls room, and he realized, for the high school level – as well as Mel Springer's found out even in the lower grades – the hormone levels don't get quite as extreme where the boys have to show off in front of the girls how tough and rough and whatever they are. So it eliminates some of that male chauvinistic powers that some of these guys want to show. She even sees it down in the lower grades, so – and one of my goals – I've given myself five to seven years that I'll be here – I would like to see that we split the intermediate – what I call the intermediate grades, or four through seven, up into boys and girls. But basically, ninety percent of the are boys down at that age. They're just a little more mischief than they need to be.

K – Now, in terms of the SBH – that's just – that's totally separate.

G – The SBH, we do house – originally they housed two classrooms of SBH. They were both high school units. This year we have an additional third classroom – it's an elementary classroom. It used to be housed at Wiggin Street out in Gambier where Kenyon College is, so – but the enrollment of the students increased at Wiggin street, and, unfortunately it always is the special ed. goes before the regular student. So they were kicked out, in essence, of Wiggin Street. There's, I believe, seven or eight students that are second graders through fifth graders, and they're housed in this building, and they need to be moved – everyone agrees that they need to be moved, we just can't find a location. This is not the best location for them, and – they don't get art, they don't get music, there's a playground here, or a basketball rim and that's it. So they don't get recess, they don't get to interact with other students in school, and I think that they're missing out on their socialization at that age level. So we're trying to find a place for them. We just don't know where to move them to.

K – But the high school SBH is also here?

G – Yeah, there's two high school SBH units, two classrooms each. I think that right at the moment there's nine or ten in each of those two classrooms. They are in the

basement. They're housed in this room – I'm sorry, they're housed in this building. I am not in charge of them, though. They're under the jurisdiction of the supervisor of special ed. down in a ----- . The classrooms I have are just the alternatives.

K – Mm-hmm, okay. In terms of the classes, I know you are looking for an English teacher, someone with a specialty in English.

G – Yes, and we've found someone and they're starting this Friday.

K – Okay, is that just for the kids to refer to if they have a problem with their English, or – how does that work?

G – Yeah, that's correct. I am pretty much in charge of the math and science and we were looking for another teacher to do the English and social studies. Now, just because I have a classroom of all boys does not mean the girls don't get math and science. I am responsible for giving them their responsible for giving them their assignments in that classroom, as well as the English teacher's responsible for giving the boys the English and social studies courses over here.

K – Do you find that they oftentimes come and ask you for help, or do they most likely work on their own?

G – I – my aide usually gets more questions than I do, because I get so many calls, or I get interrupted. So, I try to assist as much as I can, but really it's my aide who does more work – individual work with the students than I do. I get some, but not as much as I wish I could get involved. It – just because of the interaction of talking with principals at the local schools and guidance counselors and special ed. teachers and etceteras, I don't have as much time as quote being the teacher that I would like to be. I'm more of an administrator to be real honest.

K – What do you see as the purpose of this?

G – Hopefully, for some of these students, they can't seem to cope in a, in a normal school environment. Where they get in trouble with that four or five minute break in between periods. Where they get the socialization and they get to talking with other students, well what did my girl say to you, or so-and-so, somebody called you aslut, what are going to do about it?, and it – you know, those kind of rumor, those kind of conversations in between periods escalates and by the end of the day, these – boys as well as girls are, you know, ready to fight. They just can't handle the interaction of in between periods. So this is a place where they're – where they don't have that. For some students, this is – I've got a student here that is, gets, like, harassed, teased by the other students. This is a safe haven for him. Where he doesn't get the frustrations, the shoves, the innuendoes of the language that is addressed towards him. For other students, this is in lew of a suspension. Like I mentioned earlier, of the students maybe getting into a fight, instead of getting a three or five day suspension, which is when I was the super-, um, excuse me I mean when I was the assistant principal, I would tell them with

suspension you get zeros – it's worse than getting an F. You might fail with a 53%. With a suspension you get a zero. You don't get the 53%, you get a zero, so it's worse than failing a test. So getting zeros, or under suspension getting zeros can, for some of these students, really affect their grade drastically. So, coming here, it's an alternative where they're not being suspended, they're simply having an alternative placement. They can do – these are the short term students I'm talking about, the five to ten day length, where they can come here, so their schoolwork that their teachers send here and get credit for that work, it's just that they're doing it at a different location. And, then hopefully with talking with people from our, from the Moundbuilders and the Freedom Center, that they will hopefully get back on track once they get back school then.

K – How do you see that this school compares to traditional schools? What do they gain by coming here, and what, I guess, do they lose from the traditional school?

G – Well, I always tell parents, you're not getting the best education here, and that – as when I taught math, I always wanted students to have a good interaction with me. In that, I can't read minds, I want them to ask questions. And I think sometimes, when students ask questions, other students say, oh boy, that was a really good question – I didn't know how to phrase it, but I had that same concern. [Where here, the questions aren't being raised by other students. You have to ask yourself, and for some students, it's very difficult to find ways to express their – they've got a problem, but they don't even know what the problem is. They don't know how to express themselves or what they need. And that becomes a real difficult project for them to get the help that they need.] Because I'm not a mind reader. I tell them it's like going to a doctor – if you walk into a doctor's office and the first thing the nurse ask is, well, what's wrong, what are you here for, you say, well, I'm fine, they're going to shove you out the door. Well, when I come around to ask a student, what can I help you with, where do you need me to assist you? And if they say oh, I'm fine, then I've got to take them at their word that they're – it's fine. I can't read their mind as to where they need to – for me to assist. So, I mean, we do test them, but they need to ask questions along the way before I test them on the material.

K – Now, you've described a little bit already the roles of the teacher and the probation officers and the counselors. Can you elaborate a little bit more on the interaction between them and the support system that's here, like maybe a hierarchy – I'm not sure? And how the courts come into it?

G – Well, the judge is in charge of the probation officers. He would assign for a long-term basis. When he does that they are assigned a probation officer. We work with the probation officers. For example I've got a student that had a job in the first part of September, was not going to school at the start of school. He went to court on September 21st, and the judge said, well, you are going just because you're 17, no he's 16 right now – just because you're 16, that doesn't mean you should not go to school. So he assigned him here starting on the 17th. He had a good job, though, at the Alcove, and he's a bright student. He just doesn't want to go to school. So, what we are trying to work out is an arrangement, as well as being an incentive for him to go back to work, possibly in the afternoons, and get possible credits for that job, but he also has to do his

work here. So, those kind of things we try to work out with the probation officers. That is also part of where the Moundbuilders, the counselor comes in and he counsels the students in that they are trying to find out, okay, what are some – and let me back up talking about a counselor. Sometime here in the month of October, I'm not too sure when, we're getting a full-time counselor that is going to be paid through juvenile court. And that person will be responsible – as well as with the counselor from Moundbuilders – asking students what are your goals? What do you want to do after you return to your home school. Or if you're here long term – what are you going to do next year so you don't get placed here. And that your better – best education is at your home school. What are your short-term goals? What are your long-term goals? What are your goals for life? Where do you want to be directed towards? How can we help you? Do we need to direct you – if you're like a freshman and sophomore – do we need to be directing you and giving you assistance, and maybe going to the Career Center to find a, your little niche there. So, we try to meld all these people together, interacting some. I do it. I don't call the staff in together, but I'm going around and meeting with the counselors, or with the individual teachers, or I go to talk to the probation officers, rather than we all get together. Because when – starting probably February, March, and April, we'll have up to 90 students in here. Right at the moment we're at twenty -, twenty-two, I think is what we have. So, by that time, it becomes a little more hairy for us to – for any one person or teacher to, you know, - and we get more staff on board at that time as well.

K – To switch over a little bit and to focus on the students, do you see any common similarities in the students that come here?

G – From where? From what? I'm not with you, I'm sorry.

K – Just common characteristics of the students that come here.

G – Oh, of the students here. Hmmm. I would say that one thing that a lot of them have is a chip on their shoulder. Umm....Individually, they're all great people. I go to all the classrooms to hand out their lunches during the day, and 90% of them will thank me for, you know, giving them their lunch. You talk to them, and they'll, you know, respond. There's no one a total jerk in here with me. A common thread.....Hmmmmmm. See, I'm an optimist. I would say the maj – I feel everyone has a good side, and I see the good side. Some of these students come in here – one boy said, well, as long as the teacher doesn't yell at me, I don't get upset. Well, I don't like people yelling at me either. That gets me upset, so I'm – and being a slow learner, I could see where he would react, and then that just snowballs and causes a lot of other things. We get along fine. I – you know, I just simply walk up to him, rather than yell across the classroom get to work, I just simply say, you know, Joe, it's time – you need to get to work here. And that's all that needs to be said. So I think if you show the students - any student, it doesn't have to be student up here – you show them a little bit of respect, you'll get respect in return.

K – What are the different...

G – And...Excuse me for interrupting – I never know if I'm answering you question, not the way you want them, but if I'm actually answering you question. So anytime I'm not answering the question of what you're asking, and I get off the deep end on something, back me up and...

K – Oh, no. You're doing fine.

G – Okay.

K – What are the different offenses that kids – students can get sent here for? Or, in terms of – does it vary by high school?

G – It varies by high school. Some high schools – for example, East Knox goes on a merit basis. If they have so many offenses and – I don't know what they are, I'm sure a fight has more demerits than let's say, sleeping in class, for example. But if they get so many demerits, then they get sent here. When I was an assistant principal at the high school, it depended upon how many times they came in through my door that finally led them here. A fight always was a suspension. Smoking was a suspension. Shoving – shoving a teacher, I mean that's major, as far as I was concerned, as well as a teacher shouldn't shove the student, and vice versa. But, so I –I'm sorry now that I mentioned that statement – what was your question again?

K – Oh, it was what the general offenses are...

G – The general ones are two. Unruliness – if they're being unruly in the classroom, where some teachers I know, being a former teacher, you try to put up with Johnny, or Judy, and you tell them to be quiet, but after a certain time – many times if you tell him you're ready to, you know, kick him out of the class room, and, you know, out of my sight, so they're sent here for being unruly. Or, a, truancy – where they're missing school, or just cutting classes, etceteras. So those were the two main issues.

K – In terms of the discipline here at the school, how often is the family brought in? You explained the intake process a little bit, but if you could go into what exactly you talk with them about..?

G – Okay, I talk to them. First of all we get an emergency medical form filled out. I get a data sheet which is just personal information of address and those kind of things, why they're here, if they're on any medication, do they get a free lunch, those kind of things. Then we get into the second sheet, which is called authorization for disclosure. There's three main thing on that sheet of paper that I need consent from the parents. One, that I have the authority to report back to their home school any of the work or any of the grades that they do here. The second is that the parents are away that the Moundbuilders guidance center will be talking to their son or daughter, as well as someone from the Freedom Center. That's the disclosure form. The second form is just an awareness form, in that, any student here can be drug and/or alcohol tested by our probation officers. If we feel someone is normally bright-eyed and bushy tailed, and they're coming in here,

they're eyes are blurred, they can't even keep their head up, we might have the concern of drug abuse, and we would get them drug tested at that point. And we just simply note – or tell the parents, this is part of the program here. And the third sheet is an information sheet for the Freedom Center. It's just simply some background questions that are asked the person from the Freedom Center gets started into this hour conference. Just some general questions to ask. Then I go over with the parents our student and parent handbook so they are aware of our rules and regulations. 90% of them would be the same as at a high school. We might be a little stricter in some of the things in that we allow – for example, pieced earrings, which are the studs, we do not allow the looped earring in that they can be pulled off, and we don't want any damage that way of a student. We do want all shirts tucked in – that's boys and girls. Pants worn up at the waist level, not on the hips. We do not allow students to drive here even though they're seventeen. We tell them that's fine, you can drive to the high school, and then the high school will bus you to here. We do not want students to drive here, where, at the end of the day, then they'll all load up with students that are not legally allowed in that ----- cars, so we try to protect them in that sense. We don't allow musical devices, or beepers. We don't want that equipment brought here and then destroyed by other students. So, if they don't bring it, you know, we eliminate that. We don't allow certain pops – the high caffeine pops – Jolt, Kick, Surge, Mountain Dew, Mellow Yellow, those kind of things we just don't allow student to drink here.

K – And that's because of the high caffeine?

G – High-caffeine. We just simply don't want them to climb up the ceiling. And this is – they're very subdued here in that there's not much movement, so we don't want to, you know, have something to counteract that mood.

K – In terms of the discipline here, is it generally Podville? Or, when – in what circumstances is Podville used?

G – IF a student, for example – in the student handbook, as we were talking earlier, I didn't mention this – if – a parent is supposed to call us before nine o'clock in the morning to say if someone is absent – that they're sick, they can't be here. Um, if we don't get a call by nine, we are under the impressions that they're truant. And, with that, we put them for the time – for the length of time that they are not here, we put them in a room which is called Podville. These are big carrels which are, four by five, I would say – maybe three by four area – and they sit in this walled area for all day, if they missed a day with no phone call. If we have a student here and they're supposed to be working and we've already talked to them – said to them that, Johnny, you need to get your head up off the table and start working, first, if he says – gets, you know, nasty with us, well, you just go on up to Podville for fifteen minutes, twenty – fifteen minutes to a half hour. We'll call you back down. Or if he gets his head up and then falls asleep later, then we don't even wake – well, we have to wake him up – but we say you need to go to Podville for a half hour. Normally we do not have problems. I mean, when we tell students that, they go. When I was here last year for a couple months I had some students that, you know, really questioned the authority, my authority. This year, I've got a bunch of kids

who really do not cross me if I tell them, you know. They know that they've done something wrong. They know that they're done it, and let's get on with -----? So, basically this year's group of students is a very good group. Now, I would say I'm not filled up yet, with 20 students, so I don't know what will come in the next few weeks.

K – Right. Now, is it ever taken above Podville? Is it ever taken back to the courts?

G – If a student is sent to Podville for five times, then it is – yes, then they are reported back, they're taken back to juvenile court with the judge. Now, what he does, I don't know. I do know – we're talking about Podville and actually what we are doing, we are sending them to our – what we should be calling our detention room. Podville is a term that is used for students – I'm sorry – for adults – adolescents, excuse me, who are in trouble with juvenile court, and the court places them in Podville, in that the parents can't keep control of them, or the parents don't know where they are in the evenings. And Podville runs from six o'clock until ten o'clock Monday through Saturday nights, and that's paid through juvenile court, and they have they're own manpower of people who are housed up there, where students sit up there. So we use that room during the school day, but actually, they're going to detention in the Podville room. The kids call it Podville, but...

K – It's like going to the office.

G – It's like going to the – well, your bypassing the office. You're just going to the detention room. And we have someone who's – that is housed up there during the day. And, I mean, they – there's a course that they have to fill out – why the student's sent there, how long they were there, what day, etceteras. So, they keep track, and when someone's been there for five days, they just refer them to juvenile court of being unruly.

K – How effective do you see the discipline at detention?

G – I see it as being very effective with our type of students. Now, unfortunately we have – well, not unfortunately – we have two, the two high school units of SBH here, and it's unfortunate, because of their behavior, they get to – they get sent up to Podville quite a bit. And I, not that I'm – I'm not in charge of those classrooms. I think they're being sent up there too much, is my personal opinion. I mean, they've got a severe behavior problem. I think this is an out of for them not to be in the classroom. It's like a vacation to go up there and sit because, no one's bothering them, there's no one, no teacher trying to teach them, and I would say that 90%....

-----END OF SIDE A-----

G - ...quite a few students who have gone up to the detention room for amounts. And the ones who have been sent up are the ones who didn't show up to school, and the parents didn't give us a call, or they slept in class. It isn't anything that – what I consider real major that they've gone up for yet.

K – In terms of the teacher that was just hired, how – what's the recruitment of the hiring process of the teachers here? Do they have any special training.

G – Do you mean for this new teacher that we are hiring?

K – Well, for hiring teachers here in general. Is there a...?

G – Well, they have to have a certificate, Ohio – be certified by the state of Ohio. I – we've hired an English teacher, now that's what we've had in the past. I changed my opinion after talking to a couple of people, that what we really need is a special ed. kind of a person who could – yeah, special ed. – who could do a multitude of many courses. And I kind of agreed with that, but, it was too late for us to change our tune in the middle of the stream, so we do have an English person who is qualified to do other things. In fact this person has taught over twenty years in the state of Oregon, and is coming back to Ohio to teach. And this person found out this information that we had a job opening through the internet. That's how we came by – you know, he happened to be in Ohio when he found this out, his father is ill, and he's presently staying here in Ohio, and now he's going to be here a little longer.

K – Right, just in terms of – he doesn't have any special ed. background, or...

G – No. He's taught a lot of low classes, and that's what we have a majority of students on the lower end of the spectrum. In other words, we don't have – not that we don't have any – but we seldom have students who are taking chemistry or physic or Latin 3 or Spanish 4, etc., it's usually students who are in the basic English or basic math. We have an eighth grader right at the moment who's not doing well, and we finally got, we were able to get her tests, and found out she's reading on the third grade reading level, so we've got to back up in what we're teaching her, in that she just can't comprehend what we're offering her on the eighth grade. And it's unfortunate, because in the sixth grade, she failed two years ago, last year they promoted her any way and put her in the seventh grade, and she missed – I think it was 49 days. So, they said, well, with her missing so many days, they would place her up here at the Alternative Center this year, but we'll put you in the eighth grade. So, now, here we've got a girl who didn't pass the sixth grade and the seventh grade, and we're supposed to work miracles by having her finish the eighth grade to be ready for high school next year. Well, she's at the third grade reading level, and we've got a lot of work to do with this young gal.

K – Right.

G – Um, I'm not to sure if I answered the question on certification for the teachers, though. I forget what I said, now.

K – Well, I mean I was just curious if there was a certain general background that you look for in a teacher, because it is a different style, or learning – teaching experience.

G – Well, yeah. I'm looking for a teacher who is both an authoritarian as well as can listen to these students. I mean, these students come with a lot of baggage with them from home, their environment, just history in school, low self-esteem, no goals, and I need someone who can really, not only be an educator, be a nurse, be a mom, be a dad, be a counselor, because these kids will open up with you if you give them a chance.

K – In terms of the information that you get during the intake, what, of that, is shared with other teachers, and probation officers?

G – Well, I share it with – as much as I can – with – the probation officers probably know more than what I do, even from before the intake, they could give me the low down of the family history, probably. But I share with the teachers, you know, why they're being sent here, any concerns that there are at home. I also share this with the counselors to try to direct them as to where they can assist this student coming into this environment to try and give the student as much help as we can, as well as increase their self-esteem. I think if we could accomplish those two – for high school level students, if we can get them to the level of passing into the next grade, building upon their self-esteem, I would say we had been successful with that individual.

K – How well do the students keep pace with their classes when they're here? I mean, do they finish their assignments, or, what kind of...?

G – I have changed the procedure. In the past they were just given, they were given, for example in math, they were given their math book and said, okay, when you complete chapter one, you take the test, and then if you pass that, you can start chapter two. You need to finish the book by the end of the year. Well I've taught on the college level, and at least I gave my students on the college level a syllabus of what I was expecting – what I was wanting to do on the different sessions. So what I have broken down is the different courses in math and science and some of the social studies courses, and then from breaking it down I determine, well how much of that do they, should they be able to do in a day's time here. And I've made up a little sheet, you know, like a Monday through Friday, these are your assignments in the different courses. So I hand that sheet out what I am anticipating from them to be – to do, you know, in a particular week. Now I, and then the next week I hand out another sheet of what I expect them to do then. I have met with each student once since we've started school, as to where they are when I'm saying they are, what tests they have taken, what we need to change, if we need to change the structure of where they are as to getting them more help, or are we going to slow, etc. So I give them a sheet, hopefully that that will give them a direction as to what I expect them to do on a daily basis.

K – Okay, How often do the students go here graduate? I mean, do a lot of them – if a student comes in and you see by the time they're going to be eighteen, they will not be able to graduate. Do you change the focus more on the GED?

G – Yes.

K – Okay, how so?

G – Well, we don't want someone just to turn eighteen and because legally, at age eighteen, they can walk out this door – unless they're on probation, then that's a little different story – plus we don't like taking in students who are over eighteen, because they are considered an adult, and we can't file in juvenile court – get the backing of juvenile court with an eighteen year old. But, yeah, some students – you get a student in here who's maybe 17 years old and has two and a half credits. Well, we need to face facts that he's not going to – to graduate from Mt. Vernon, you need 19 credits – he's not going to get 17 credits here in a year. It's going to take two or three years. That would **fucking??** mean he's going to be 20, or so. It's just unrealistic to think that this student is going to graduate. The best bet is to – let's work towards the GED, and that's where we try to help them, and assisting them, preparing. We can – not at this particular location – we can send them someplace to take the **CREED** test, to see where we need to work with them. And then to take the GED when they're comfortable with – whatever help we can give them.

K – But the credits that you earn here can be – are just taken over to the high school in general..?

G – Correct, yeah. What credits they – for high school, these are for high school students – whatever credits they take here and get credit for is accepted back at their home schools, yes.

K – How well do they generally fare when they return to their high schools?

G – Well, that's a good question. I'm working up this year, going back to '93, I put it in the computer to – to answer the percentage, that I can't answer off the top of my head. I feel the outcome will be, those who are on a short term basis – who have been here 5 days or 10 days – their percentage of graduating is going to be high. Those who come here on a long term basis, probably their percentage of graduating is going to be smaller. We've got – I've got one young man here, this is his third year here, and he's – I think he's a junior. He is a junior. I've got another – a girl who turns 18 in February. She knows that she can't do, you know, on a high school level, in that she's got – she has a job from 4 o'clock to 11 o'clock at a nursing home. So what she does is she's coming here and she is going to take 3 English classes, she has 2 math classes, she has American History, she has government, and she has a PE course. I think that's like, seven or eight – and a health credit. So that's like 7 and three quarters or 8 and three quarters credit that she's going to take here. She knows that it's going to be very difficult, and we're not anticipating her to be finished in June. It might have – she might have to work through the month of June. Or she might have to come back next year for a month or two for her to finish out. And so, and we make those allowances for students. She does want to get a, her diploma. She doesn't want to get a GED because with her experience at this nursing home, she wants to be become an LPN, so she wants to – she's got to go and she has her self motivation and her drive to reach this goal. And I do expect her to do it, and we're open not – we're open beyond the end of the school year. I'm here through the

month of June, I do get the month of July off, and then August 1 I'm back on duty. Now the ----- is – if you don't finish by June 30th, don't hang it up, I'll be here August 1, and you can come back and sit and continue on, even if it takes you into, you know, when school starts at the end of August, that's fine. I said, there's no problem, we will work it out.

K – Great, that's - I mean, she feels that the learning style here fits her better?

G – Yes, yes, yes. In that she's bright enough to do the work on her own. And our lessons are not so terribly difficult. But as I say, if you have questions, she's more – feel free to ask. We – if I don't have the answer, well I'll go somewhere where I can find the answer.

K – In terms of the students that do return to their regular high school, do you have any concept of what their experience is there – how their teachers treat them, whether...?

G – When they come back?

K – When they go back to their high school.

G – Well, I'm hoping that they come back with open arms. Unfortunately, I've got to say I'm, to be realistic, once you're kind of – I guess maybe this is human nature – you're kind of targeted and you're a trouble maker, if there's any trouble in the classroom, they always kind of look to that person again, whether that person did it or not, that's the first person you kind of look at because you caused trouble in the past, so you get so named as a trouble maker. And that's unfortunate, but again, I think that's part of human nature. My guess is.

K – Now, what percentage comes back, or is a repeat offender?

G – So far this year, we've had one student out of what –arrives?-- - well, let me see. (*sound of papers rustling*) In the month of October, there's 25 - one, two, three – we've had 47 students – 47 different students. In that 47 students in the month of October, one person came back. He was here in September, and the first part of October, then he came back here and just left this last Friday, so we've only had one student come back. But there are students who do repeat. We've had – we do have students here that were here last year. I don't know the count of that. I'll say maybe ten students have been here previously – from the, in the previous year.

K – What do you find constitutes a success for a student here, or for yourself and their teacher, as their admistrator?

G – I'm hoping, and again, I'm just starting out, so I've only done this for two months – I'm hoping that the success will be, one, to see some of these students get their degree, in the five, between five and seven years that I plan on being here – that I see a lot of these students get their diploma. Or for those who are, unfortunately beyond our help and need

to go to a GED, that they can pass the GED. Or for some of these students who are just borderline.... unruly, I'll say, that they come here and then they don't come back. The young man that has been here a second time this year, I give it a month before he comes back and he'll be here full-time. He's just too full of energy. He's supposed to take ritalin, and he forgets it most days, and he – he's just going off the wall. You just have to calm David down...almost all the time. He just wants to talk talk talk talk talk talk talk talk. Real real real real real fast.

K – If you could go into detail about the recent plans for a change in the Alternative Center, or what has been done over the past couple years.

G – Well, we have five classrooms that we can use. The girls up in the high school – eight through twelve, the boys eight through twelve, the intermediate four through seven – those are our basic three rooms. When the high school boys room fills up, we have an overflow room, and they can take twenty students. And when that room fills up, we have another room which would take another 15. So we can house 90 students – 75 from 8 through 12, and 15 from the intermediate. The girls and boys high school units used to be housed in the basement of this building, and the intermediate was up on the first floor.. I moved the two high school units up to the first floor where I – being the administrator, I am in more close vicinity to know what goes on in any of the other classrooms. When I was here for two months last year in January and February, I was in the basement and I felt being isolated from the overflow room as well as the intermediate classroom, I just didn't know what was going on in those classrooms, being up on the first floor and I was down in the basement. So that why I – I've repositioned the locations of these. Plus, when Mr. Young was the director here, he did the intake conferences in the basement in a hallway, and he has just these wrote-on, mesh screens that he separated, and that was his office area, where up here on the first floor is where we're meeting now is - it's a small office, used to be, I'm assuming it was probably the principals office when this used to be an elementary building.

K – Are there any other changes that you see coming along in the next few years?

G – I would like to see, in the intermediate group, I don't know if I mentioned this before, but the separation of the boys and girls. In our phys ed program last year, they went to the Y, and literally, just here's the ball – go play, for two hours. That was alright, but I would like to see a little difference of approach, and what I plan on doing this year is having other activities. One, going to the bowling alley, and we'll bus them out to the bowling alley. Take them over to the bike path, and have them walk down to Kenyon College and walk back in the two hour period, which, you know, there's plenty of time for them to walk that distance. Take them putt-putting. Take them over to the tennis courts. Have a little bit more variety of things. Last year there was a welding class, I know, that started while I was here, and there were twelve students. Probably at the end of school, in June, there were three students taking that course. I would like to see them take that course and have a multitude of interest. Have them go a few weeks into welding, a few weeks into block-laying, a few weeks into electrics, electricity, a few weeks into woodworking. Have them go around in the different programs at the Career

Center so these students as freshmen and sophomores say, hey I kind of like that woodworking – maybe that's where I need to direct myself as a junior or senior. So give them this little taste of what it could be, so that's what I'd like to see – a change in that experience.

K – How about in terms of focus of the school. I know there's been a toss up where people have has a hard time distinguishing between whether we're here to discipline them, or whether we're here to educate them. What do you think the primary goal is?

G – Our primary goal – this is an Alternative Center for them to reach their education.

K – Their education...

G – Yeah. I feel education is number one. That we are trying to meet the goal that they continue in their education. They're here because they don't have the self-discipline in behaving themselves, and that's what got them in trouble, for a lot of them, - their disruptions in class, and that's why they're sent here. Yeah, we discipline them, but that is not – I don't stand out there with a whip and, you know, have them, you know, be little soldiers. I can laugh and joke and talk with them – not that it's an all day conversation, because I do want them to be quiet because a lot of students, they need the quiet to learn. They have ADD, attention deficit disorder, or something distracts them, then that takes away from their learning. So we try to keep it as quiet as possible, but I'm also a human being too, as well as them, that they need to interact and show that we're all human beings. And I talk to them all individually as I go around and collect money, or whatever, for their lunches. You know, how you doing today, what – is there anything I can help you with, blah, blah, blah. So, you know, there's some interaction, so – but, getting back to your original question, yeah, it's the education is what we're mainly here for, but it's because of their discipline that brought them here.

K – Just to step back, what exactly is the CYP program?

G – CYP is the Community Youth Program. What it is is, where a student is – goes in front of the court, and let's say they've been at a party and they got themselves drunk and, you know, they've taken a car out, and wrecked it, or whatever, and they go before the judge. He puts them on probation, and he gives them 60 hours of community work. Where that CPY – CYP is their time of working for the court system. Here in this building what we might have them do is rake leaves out in the yard. They painted two classrooms over the summer. And me, coming on duty in August of this year, and where the Alternative Center – all the materials and the desks and everything was downstairs, and we had the SBH unit's desks and everything up here. We needed to get things moved from one level to the other. It was the CYP students who had community youth hours. They came in and did all the moving of this, these desks. They go down and take leaves on the square. They'll shovel walks on the court house, or around here. They go over – they go out to the county fair after it's over, and they clean the whole fairgrounds. You know, it takes them about a week to cover that whole fairgrounds area and clean it up. They get a lot more hours in the summer, obviously, because they're not in school,

but in – when there's school, CYP is from 4 to 6 o'clock housed in this building, where they come here and get their rakes, or get whatever they need to go out and do community – do whatever the probation officers are going to have them do for that particular day. That's...either five or six days a week. They do that from 4 to 6, and then some of them get off that and then they come here for Podville from 6 to 10. Or some of them are court ordered to come here and we have a conference room upstairs, and they go over there and it's study time. They work in there.

K – Are they generally SBH, or are they....?

G – That I can't answer because I am not charge of those student. I don't – I would say they might have maybe 4 or 7 students at any particular time. Some nights, they might only have one student. That other three just didn't show up and – now, they don't use our classrooms.

K – Are they students from here that are in it, or no?

G – I know of one student is, and he's a 7th grader, over in Mel's classroom. And none of my students – I don't think any of my students are in the CYP program at this moment. If they are, I am unaware of it.

K – Well, is there any thing else you would like to add?

G – No, any time that you – I mean you've been here and – didn't you work here, or...?

K – I've worked with some of students here.

G – Yeah. I'm always interested in hearing, or listening to ideas to improve this are. I know we have people coming in. We've had people coming in from Miskinham county, Union county, Delaware county, Union county. They come here to observe this area – this school – to adopt it. But I know that we don't have a panacea, that we know everything here, and one of my goals in the next couple of months here is to go visit other alternative centers in the state to pick up ideas of how we can improve this area. So I'm always interested in improving what we can do for the benefit of these students.

K – W hat have you learned from the school? I know that you haven't worked here that long, but..

G – Kids are kids. Even though there's a lot of these students who, as I said earlier, have a lot of baggage, we need to try to give them the best education that we are – can. I won't say it's a comparable education to what they would get at their home school, but for some of these student, they can't handle that environment. After learning that, as the assistant principal at Mt. Vernon high school, I was the person who sent the students here, so now I – I'm flipping – you know, if you talked to me when I was in that position, I would say well, they're out of our school, they're out of the classroom where now that teacher can teach that – the other 28 or 29 students without Joey in the classroom, so it's

good from that standpoint. I would be talking about the welfare of the other students. Now I'm on the receiving end, and now I've got it – now I'm concerned about the students that are being sent here. I need to give them the best education that is possible and that they can handle. So, that is my goal.

K – Do you have any questions for me?

G – Not at all.

K – Okay.

G – You've done an excellent job.

K – Thanks. Is there anyone you suggest that I talk to. I was thinking Joe Mazari and ...

G – Joe Mazari would be good. If you want some – someone who really wants to talk frank, Carol Everett...

K – I talked to her already...

G – Oh, you've already had a talk with her? Okay. She'll give you the low down.

K – Yeah.

G – Um, like you've already said you're going to be talking with Judge Ronk, and you've talked – have you met with Ray Richardson yet?

K – Yes.

G – Okay, okay. So, I would be interested in hearing that tape, but a.. (*laughter*) But a, no I can't think of any – you might want to get, for example, like what I was talking about when I was assistant principal. You might want to set up a meeting with Mr. Coon, who's the principal at Mt. Vernon high school, or Mr. Julius, whose the principal for (something)-town, or Mr. Barrett, who is over at Utica, to get their viewpoints because they're the people who are sending them here.

K – Right.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----